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## **The Cube: A Cinema Archaeology**

Author: The Cube<sup>1</sup>

The Cube is a volunteer-run mixed-arts-cinema space in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol, UK. Opening in 1998 in King's Square, at the site of the former Arts Cinema (the first of the British Film Institute's Regional Film Theatres), the Cube has generated and held a diverse range of events, people and materials during its life.<sup>2</sup> Since June 2015, the Cube has been involved in a collaborative contemporary archaeology project that has brought together volunteers and archaeologists to learn archaeological and heritage interpretation methods in order to investigate the human and other-than-human pasts, presents and futures of this place. The project emerged in response to the Cube's purchase of its building and developing plans to reconfigure the interior spaces. The renovation is driven in part by regulatory pressures around health and safety, access issues and a desire to open up the Cube more to its communities as a making and meeting space. However, the planned renovations have generated anxieties about loss: of character, of patina, of an undefined magic of place that generates the specific sense of community that Cube volunteers feel. By engaging in a range of archaeological practices, from the conventionally photogrammetric to practices of observation and performance that aim to respond to the cinema as an affective space, we – the collection of authors – felt that we could intervene in the melancholic aesthetic of loss (Freud, 1917) to consider what a media archaeology might contribute to the development of a progressive heritage.

Over the course of the project to date, we looked at the building in its landscape context, we listened to its sound environment, we explored textures and texts, we recorded materials, we photographed junk and writing on the wall. We framed the ebb and flow of things through the space and transformed event into image. We considered conducting chemical analyses of soot in order to design our own paints. We enjoyed ourselves and experienced this place anew. Importantly, we have asked: how does approaching a cinema from an archaeological perspective contribute to our understandings of place?

Film scholarship has guided readers to understandings of historical cinema-going experiences through its focus on memory and on the human-centred aspects of encountering both the cinema space and the films screened. This work introduced reception studies to film scholarship and insisted on the importance of audience in a collaborative relationship with the silver screen. Jackie Stacey (1994), Janet Staiger (1992) and Annette Kuhn's (2002) cultural studies approaches placed the human – often female – experience of spectatorship at the centre of cinema's meaning. However, the physical, material experience of screen media has more recently emerged in the writing of scholars with interests in artists' moving image. Maeve

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<sup>2</sup> The Cube is variously known as The Cube, the Cube, Cube and Cube Microplex. In this paper, we adopt 'the Cube' and 'Cube volunteers'.

Connolly discusses cine-material screens and structures in *The Place of Artists' Cinema* (p. 163-212) while Catherine Elwes writes about the role of architecture and the material specificities of the built environment of moving image installation in her recent book *Installation and the Moving Image* (p. 11-20). Informed by Karen Barad's agential realism (2007), Kim Knowles focuses on the material intra-activities of analog and digital film practices to insist on the materiality of moving image processes and its role in shaping encounters with it in the cinema or gallery (2015; 2016). In *The Cinemas Project*, curator and writer Bridget Crone works alongside artists to respond to cinema as a site in which images appear and also as the material technology *through* which they appear (2014). In short, moving images move their audiences, take them places and also take place (after Rhodes and Gorfinkel, 2011) in terms of the locations at which they are shot and in which they are made. They are assemblages of materials that actively make place in relationships of exhibition and reception.

How might these assemblages of place, media, matter and people be approached? In this chapter, we collectively focus on the Cube to suggest that engaging in a range of diverse collaborative archaeological practices generates thick descriptions of specific media materialities, material-social agencies, temporalities and aesthetics that congregate within and around the volunteer-run arts space (Parikka, 2013). Put another way, by engaging in archaeological practices, we attempt to think the cinema beyond either a passive container of human activity or an ideological determinant of human behaviour. Instead, we try to explore the co-constitution, co-production and collaboration between human and other-than-human matters in the space that is known as the Cube. Drawing on both archaeology as such – the diverse range of multiscale methods that seek to understand change through time by recording of material-discursivities – and the broad field of media archaeologies that are the subject of this volume we ask: what are the methodological and conceptual questions generated through a meeting between media archaeology and archaeology as a discipline and practice?

### ***What is Archaeology – materialities, scale, place***

Jussi Parikka writes that media archaeology 'is not a progress story – or a story of a decline of civilizations – but is continuously written anew and branded by discontinuities' (in Ernst, p. 3). According to Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, to write this story the 'so-called German and Canadian media theories' stress 'the materialities rather than the hermeneutics of communication' in order to figure 'the routines and operations of the human psychic apparatus...as modeled on—and developing in feedback with—media technologies' (p. 382). However, what methods are used to stress these materialities and write these discontinuous stories? In this chapter, we suggest that it was through a media archaeological practice that we began to understand what Karen Barad formulates as relational ontology (2007). This concept problematizes both notions of individualism (the idea that entities precede relations) and representationalism (the assumption the ideas and language exist separately from the material world and can neutrally describe it). An archaeology of the Cube therefore offers a way to manifest the intra-action of emergent, co-forming agencies and demonstrates Bernard Sieghert's argument that 'the human was always already intermixed with the nonhuman' (p. 53). The Cube also exemplifies Avital Ronell's (1989) essaying of the impact of the telephone on modern thought in terms of the particular assemblings of film, video and music technologies within a specific site that structure how, as Karen Barad articulates it, the world is 'worlded' (2007). That

is, rather than the world being given, it comes into being through agential action, in which technological assemblages, such as this arts and cinema space, perform. Like the performance of Ronell's telephone in the making of new worlds, so, too the techno-assemblage of the volunteer-run, open source ethos of the Cube. Its particular material discursive intra-actions produce new ways of world-making. In short, a media archaeology of the Cube models the community's radical collectivity through a methodological and philosophical commitment to the co-constitution of human and other-than-human agencies.

However, when media archaeology invokes 'archaeology', what kind of archaeology is imagined? Archaeology itself has a complex genealogy and history of use, from Sigmund Freud's reliance on the practice of archaeology for his model of mind (Thomas, 2009) to Michel Foucault's archaeologies of knowledge (1969). In this volume, media archaeology is, in the main, aligned with materialist media theory. In this, media archaeology has positioned itself contra archaeology *as such* due, in part, to the specific disciplinary and methodological contours of archaeology as practised in Germany. Where media archaeology and associated studies of cultural techniques explore culture as a 'humanoid-technoid hybrid' that comprises an 'actor-network that includes technical objects and chains of operations (including gestures) in equal measures' (Siegert, p. 193; see also Winthrop-Young, 2014), the archaeology practised in Germany is instead seen to eschew theoretical consideration in favour of a focus on precise excavation and finds studies (cf. Bintliff, 2011). As such, it is hardly surprising that Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka should be concerned that media-archaeology not be confused with archaeology, which they suggest is a discipline that digs through 'foundations, houses and dumps' (p. 3).

Against the notion of archaeology as solely and reductively a digging practice, British, Scandinavian, North American and Oceanic archaeology across academic and professional sectors has a deep and long-standing critical-theoretical focus on the nature and operations of its knowledge production. Discussions about archaeology as *episteme* date back at least as far as the rise of science-based, processual 'New' archaeology (Binford, 1968; Clarke, 1968). Since that time, the academic focus on 'theoretical' archaeology has sought to question what is and is not 'properly' the domain of archaeological enquiry. Bruce Trigger's *A History of Archaeological Thought* (1989) is an excellent example of the ways in which academic archaeologists have sought to problematize the discipline and to situate it as knowledge production rather than (simply) as labouring activity blindly unearthing facts. Since the publication of Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, however, archaeology-as-such has struggled to distinguish its knowledge-making practices in the public eye beyond the simply instrumentalist and methodological.

Yet, disciplinary archaeology as practised outside of the German academy is not as distinct from 'media archaeology' as some have argued (Piccini, 2015). Although some archaeologists have sought to apply technical excavation practices to media technologies (see Morgan and Perry, 2015 for their excavation of a MAD-P hard drive) it is important to hold on to and practise archaeology's various promiscuous methods. Archaeologists practise landscape archaeology, field walking, rescue archaeology, and desk-based assessment. They focus on stratigraphic superimposition and conduct meta-archaeologies of historiographic narratives. They photograph, map, draw, laser-scan, and plot. They dig, but they also touch, taste,

listen, smell, and look. They measure and compare. They work with and re-work stuff, and think in terms of landscapes. They investigate assemblings and events that congeal through specific locales, yet are entangled with many different spaces and times.

Archaeology's methodological diversity is not new, however. Antiquarian William Stukeley (1740) pioneered early archaeological techniques of observation and visualisation through drawing practices, transforming monuments into ink on paper. In the early twentieth century, O.G.S. Crawford realised the potential of aerial photography to illuminate archaeological approaches to understanding landscape use (1928). Landscape historian W.G. Hoskins (1955) introduced generations of archaeologists to walking the landscape as a powerful interpretative tool. Global archaeology has therefore never really been about digging in the dirt. If archaeology is about visualising technologies and large-scale interconnected landscapes, then it is appropriate that archaeologists seek to understand media assemblages as properly archaeological. To understand these assemblages, archaeologists use the same diverse methods as the ones they use to produce all archaeological ways of knowing. Archaeology might usefully be considered both as cultural technique and as a method of exploring cultural techniques. In fact, as Greg Bailey argues in his practice-based doctoral dissertation, 'as message carrier and cultural artefact, archaeology is both transmitter and transmission' and, as such, 'media-archaeology is always archaeology' (PhD thesis, in preparation).

Yet, there remains a tension in the discipline of archaeology. As the discipline contracts in the wake of planning deregulation, the reduction of infrastructure projects, the impacts of global austerity on the public sector and, in 2016, the removal of archaeology from the UK's A-level curriculum, the discipline has perhaps sought its fortunes by returning to claims about its scientific legitimacy. There remains debate about the 'proper' role of archaeology in contemporary society and its methodological diversity can be restrained by normative tendencies. Archaeologists with interests in media technologies, artefacts, networks and landscapes are seeking to apply rigorous methods from conventional archaeological practice in order to legitimise archaeological interests in the media and to distinguish archaeological approaches from those of the 'media archaeologists' (see Morgan and Perry, 2015). This is important work that makes a significant contribution to the field and is a valid and necessary position to take in the wake of ongoing critiques of contemporary archaeology. However, might there also be room for archaeologists to bring some of the more expansive methods used across archaeology (McAtackney, 2015; McFayden, 2012; Penrose, 2013) into the media archaeology arena? Might the empirical evidence base of media archaeology insist on newer methods to trouble normative archaeologies?

It is into this space, a space in which archaeology responds to media archaeology, that this chapter enters. In advance of major redevelopment work at the Cube, Angela Piccini was invited to undertake an archaeology of the cinema in collaboration with the community of Cube volunteers and colleagues James Dixon (Museum of London) and Thomas Kador (University College London). Piccini is based in the Department of Film and Television at Bristol University and is a Cube volunteer. She also has a background in archaeologies of the contemporary world and for ten years was involved in running the MA in Archaeology for Screen Media at Bristol. Over a number of years, Cube volunteers David Hopkinson, Graeme Hogg,

Kate Rich and Christopher Williams had wanted to record the Cube's features, from graffiti to architectural features original to the early twentieth-century Deaf Institute. Beyond a simple archaeological recording exercise, however, Hopkinson, Hogg, Rich, Williams and others wished to use the results to understand how the building has performed over time and also to inform its future. The aim of this Cube project was two-fold: to record a multi-scalar assemblage of the cinema's interior spaces and artefacts and to generate materials that could be re-assembled in future as part of an ongoing artwork to be enfolded in the cinema as part of its media heritage. We were interested in how to approach an ageing arts and cinema space crowded with film equipment and diverse material in terms of archaeological heritage – to embrace the intra-activity of spaces, technologies, materials and people as media archaeology. If archaeology is one of the practices that figures the past as a sense of future possibilities (cf Heidegger, 1962), what kinds of futures might emerge through this space and its community? In doing this collaborative project, we hoped both to contribute methodologically to the scholarly field of media archaeology and to demonstrate its potential impact beyond the academy. In this way, our cinema archaeology project is in conversation with emerging experimental media archaeologies, such as Andreas Fickers and Annie van den Oever's work on practice-based historical re-enactment (2013). However, unlike re-enactment projects (Agnew, 2004), we are not seeking to re-perform a past through deliberate theatricality. Instead, we see we adopt the observational, inductive mode of archaeology to frame site and material culture in new ways.

### ***Archaeo-Cube***

Here is a space.

[Insert Figures 1 and 2 here. Figure 1 by permission of Bristol City Council. Figure 2 Photograph: Piccini]

The Cube Microplex opened in 1998. It occupied Bristol's former Arts Centre Cinema (1981-98), which had taken over the experimental Arts Centre that ran from 1964 into the very early 1980s. Together with Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol Arts Centre was a site of national importance in the development of experimental performance and video art in Britain. Until 1962, the building operated as Bristol's Centre for the Deaf, purpose-built around 1916 on what were the grounds of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century orchards and the grand houses of Lower Kingsdown. The Cube emerged out of Club Rombus, which was run by Graeme Hogg and Kevin Dennis from 1994-98. Club Rombus organised 8mm and 16mm film club events in a range of settings - including the Bristol Arts Centre Cinema - using multiple projectors, music and archive films. Hogg and Dennis worked with Julian Hollman of Bristol Film Makers Festival to take on the lease of the cinema space in order to give a more stable home to their activities. It also provided a space for makers and viewers and everyone in between, for people who loved analog cinema technologies and the potential for digital filmmaking and for people who had little interest in the boundaries between live art, music and the moving image. The Cube continues to operate as an entirely volunteer-run space. There is a group of directors, but hierarchies are resisted and there is a commitment to self-organisation and distributed responsibility.

In 2001, a fire started in the Mayflower Chinese Restaurant, which shared its entrance with the Cube. Due to extensive smoke damage, the cinema closed for a

year, the restaurant relocated to the shopping area beneath the St James Barton Roundabout in the city centre and the volunteers refurbished the Cube. The current space reflects the 2002 re-design. After raising funds to purchase the building in December 2013, the Cube was set up as an Industrial and Provident Society and Community Land Trust. The site is now protected for community use in perpetuity. Since purchasing the building, the Cube has been working with architects to imagine a new spatial-operational future. Blueprint is the name of the project that the Cube initiated: a year of collaborating with architects to make models, workshop and record a vision for the space that involved making it fully accessible, restructuring work spaces to create more rehearsal opportunity and making it open to a wide range of community participants throughout the day and evening. As part of this process, areas of the current Cube have emerged as particularly full of memory, potential, emotion. Plans to renovate the Cube generated anxieties about loss within the volunteer community. Some of the key people involved in the Blueprint project wished to develop a range of creative approaches to involve all volunteers in the rethinking of the Cube. Archaeology was felt to offer a way to do this.

### *We Are All Archaeologists Now*

In June 2015, we gathered on a Saturday morning for a two-day workshop on archaeological methods. We began the workshop with an introduction to archaeology and a discussion about what the temporal and methodological limits of archaeology might be. We tried to trouble the notion of archaeology as merely the study of old things. Because the physical remains of the past can be spoken of only because they exist in the present, all archaeology is contemporary (see Graves-Brown, Harrison and Piccini, 2013). We linked archaeological practice with arts practices in terms of their shared attentions to the material, their attempts to exhaust material potential, their focus on assemblage (Harrison 2011), their considerations of scale (Edgeworth, 2013) and their interests in troubling relationships between event and document (Shanks and Pearson, 2001; Allegue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini, 2009). Archaeology is also always a visualising practice. From antiquarian drawings of Stonehenge to early aerial photography to current work with Geographical Information Systems, computer-aided visualisation - archaeology has been about transforming human practices of looking and measuring into visual media forms. In short, we focused on the ways in which archaeology is itself a promiscuous disposition, entangled with the media technologies that it attempts to describe.

In terms of beginning to create an archaeology of the Cube, we discussed the importance of the built environment, the way in which the building's corners, hidden spaces, layers of grime and graffiti all shape the human activities that take place there. The Cube has frequently turned to its archaeology and its history, through the practices of many of its volunteers and its various film projects and events. The Cube is invoked as sacred myth, as ritual space, bound up in its own archaeological imaginings. An example of this would be the November 2015 KLF: Chaos, Magic and The Band Who Burned a Million Pounds event. There, David Hopkinson produced an archive-film of his own and others' video documentation of the band The KLF, which wove the history of the Cube in with that of the group, and the evening ended with ritual money burning facilitated by Jonathan Harris.<sup>3</sup> These are

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<sup>3</sup> Known as Money Burning Man

<https://medium.com/@jonone100/money-burning-ritual-at-f23-fc7e256e920a#.91a9kr6t2>

the more playful edges of media archaeology that respond to the spirit and practice of the cinema, that use the building, its old technologies and its own archive as source materials for new work.

We talked about how we might transform elements of the Cube into other kinds of material such as drawings, pictures, video, instruments, notes. We considered how the Cube might want to archive itself. Did we wish to make a cabinet of curiosities? A box of tricks? A card catalogue? A vetrine? Perform a ritual burial? Transform everything into a single, dense cube? All or none of the above? We decided to set up a folder on the Cube server and a cardboard box for non-digital materials. We seemed to agree that whatever we did with the Archaeo-Cube project, we needed to be producing things that were physically accessible so that people could make new works from these materials. While there was no interest in a conservative preservation approach to the Cube's heritage, we desired a baseline snapshot of the space and its technical assemblages in order to keep open and elastic possibilities for future work.

James Dixon moved us out of this conversational/seminar space to lead the first workshop, which focused on non-recording techniques. We began the weekend with non-conventional techniques because we did not wish to reproduce the popular belief that there is a 'proper' archaeology or that participants necessarily required specialist skills to conduct archaeological survey. Moreover, by beginning with a refusal to privilege the transformation of the archaeology into another form of material record we insisted on the primacy of observational practices and the eventness of archaeological interpretation.

We organised ourselves into pairs and spent the rest of the morning looking and listening. Each pair followed one of these five instructions:

1. Explore the exterior of the Cube from different positions in order to explore its situation in a landscape context
2. Observe ways in which text operates
3. Listen to the Cube's various soundscapes
4. Collect rubbish
5. Follow the interior structure

When we reconvened in the Cube car park, James Dixon announced to us that because we had completed our first non-recording surveying task, we were all archaeologists now (pace Holtorf, p. 160). He then asked us to describe what we had done and what we had found to the group.

Group 1 spoke about taking the decision to explore how far we could walk from the Cube while still keeping it in sight. Although this may echo the psychogeographical practices developed by Guy Debord and the Situationists International, it is also an established landscape archaeology method, mixing the early work of W. G. Hoskins (1955) with 1960s phenomenology, psychogeography and experimental land art practice. We began by walking the perimeter of the building to explore its architectural context. Starting from the parking lot, we walked up to Dove Street, which appears on the 1828 Ashmead map as Duke Street, and then walked south-west to the corner of Princess Row (see Figure 1). We walked south-east along Princess Row, tracing the rear wall of the Cube along the narrow cobbled



lane, until we reached the junction with Dighton Street, where the Cube's rear exterior becomes obscured by Llewellyn's Gears, a specialist engineering company opened in 1833 on King's Square. We then retraced our steps up to Dove Street and decided to ascend into Kingsdown, the hilly residential area to the north and north-west of the Cube. Gaining height by following a pedestrian walkway from the lower loop of Dove Street to its upper loop behind the Carolina House block of flats, we stopped at various points to look back at the Cube and to discuss how the early twentieth-century building sits within its mixed-use and multi-period urban landscape setting. We were struck by how the bird's-eye view produces a sense of the Cube as sitting within a small enclave of Georgian houses and gardens, that although the building is early twentieth-century, its proportions and setting place it within a Georgian context rather than the other surrounding contemporary architecture. Adopting a landscape archaeology approach highlighted the multi-period nature of the city as viewed from this point and brought the importance of scale to the fore such that the Cube appears very differently whether looked at within its immediate surroundings, within a 1km radius or with the visible horizon as the limit point. Looked at in this way, the Cube becomes a reference point for understanding the rest of the city.

(insert Figure 3 here. The Cube, photographed from Carolina House. Photograph: Dixon and Gregory)

There is not the space in this paper to describe each of the other groups' tasks in detail. However, Group 2 led us into the men's toilets to discuss the texts found in the form of graffiti and to compare the graffiti there with that in the women's toilets. Group 3 led us into the bar area and showed us the range of sound sources in the room. Two 1200 series Technics turntables, a sound mixer, a CD player and ceiling-mounted speakers were the most obvious sound producers. However, two Casio SE-G1 cash registers and a glitter ball also produce both percussive and ambient electronic sound. Glasses clink and crisp packets rustle. The motorised glitter ball about the bar produces an underlying mechanical whirr as it rotates. And the low ceiling and oak parquet flooring create a particular sonic environment that shapes how we hear things. Group 4 then led us into the cinema auditorium for a conversation about the things collected from the floors. We talked about how difficult it was to decide whether some things were on the floor because they were forgotten or because they were lost or because they were no longer needed. This fed into a broader conversation about the nature of rubbish and how, through practice, we determine what is to be considered waste and what is to be retained. We also discussed the spatial distribution of material on the floor and how the larger and smaller items concentrate in different areas, from floor centre to periphery.

Finally, Group 5 took us on a walk through the Cube to look at different structural and decorative features. Inside the cupboard to the right of the stairs that leads into the auditorium from the bar is a feature that is potentially original to the Deaf Institute. Shining a flashlight up into the interior of the space, about 2m above floor height, a line of wooden beading is visible, which runs for approximately 1m until it hits the back of the wall of the cinema auditorium. The beading is a decorative feature and marks the remains of an interior wall, arguably of a space that would have seen some collective use rather than a private room. We explored the sound booth at the back of the cinema auditorium and found that beneath the plaster is a section of wall built in rough stone rather than brick.

(Insert Figure 4 here. Remains of the wall. Photograph: Dixon and Gregory)

Our buildings expert, James Dixon, suggested that this wall predates the Deaf Institute. As it looks like a nineteenth-century feature, it is possibly the remains of an outbuilding from the house that once stood on this site and is visible on the 1858 Ashmead map. We then walked through the projection booth at the back of the auditorium, with its 35mm projector and DCP set up, its monitor stacks and trays of microphones, xlr leads, empty 35mm film take-up reels, amps, envelopes and empty DVD cases. We exited onto a roof level to see the wooden-louvered lantern that sits on the top of the Cube before walking to the rear entrance of the cinema, to look at a range of now-bricked-in gaps that run along the rear exterior wall. These bricked-in features tell of past doors and windows and the past spatial relations of the building.

(Insert Figure 5 here. Projection room. Photograph: Piccini)

As the final group ended its account, Dixon announced that we were ‘all heritage interpreters now’. The first phase of our archaeological training was complete.

#### *Experience and Record*

On Day 2, we began with an introduction to the idea of conventional archaeological recording. Dixon’s non-recording archaeological methods from the previous day were discussed in the context of their proximity to the range of artistic practices represented by Cube volunteers. As volunteers, we found playful and experiential methods of engaging with the cinema’s multi-scalar materialities familiar, yet we also expressed a desire to learn more conventional methods. This was in part due to our need to engage knowledgeably with architects and planners and also a sense of legacy: what we could leave behind as a legible archive. This stimulated a conversation about mark-making and the recording of marks, with a focus on the camera as writing tool and the connections between the cinematic sense of the *camera stylo* (Astruc, 1948) and the ways in which recording technologies produce the archaeological (Lucas, 2012; Wickstead, 2013).

Thomas Kador introduced the practice of photogrammetry. In archaeology, photogrammetry involves producing a systematic and methodical series of overlapping photographs of objects or surfaces and processing those images through software to create a stitched-together image. Frequently used to produce 3D models of objects, photogrammetry is also used to generate high fidelity, detailed surface maps of features. Kador demonstrated the principles of photogrammetry before proceeding to map the Cube’s interior graffiti wall, which is located in the corridor that links the rear access to the office and the bar space.

(Insert Figure 6 here. Cube graffiti. Photograph: Kador)

The richness of graffiti in the Cube has been valued by the volunteer community over many years and provides a focal point both for emotional attachment to the space and its perceived heritage value by volunteers and Cube visitors. The women’s toilets had been a site of special heritage interest in the graffiti since the 1998 opening, but the stall walls were painted and papered over in the late-2000s. However, the extant graffiti at that time was photographed and printed out and used

as wallpaper as part of a decorative tidying up effort. This 'tidying' has itself produced tension and various users of the toilets have expressed their unhappiness with the effective erasure of significant elements of women's textual histories in the Cube. Since the Cube's refurbishment following the 2001 fire, the rear corridor has also become a site of multiple inscriptions, including a 2005 marking of Angela Piccini's height, at the age of 37, alongside friends and her son, Milo Piccini Noble, at the age of 5. Although some of this graffiti can tend towards the scatological – 'Laura's bum' – this long corridor primarily engages with the domestic practice of marking family members' heights within the home and evidences claims that Cube volunteers make about the community being an alternative family form.

Following the introduction to conventional photographic recording of archaeological features we returned to work in pairs to focus on particular aspects of the Cube that interested us, using whichever combinations of methods we desired. A key site in the Cube that was of interest to a number of people was the doorway frame that separates the the office from the serving bar area. During the same short period that saw the corridor graffiti emerge, extensive markings were drawn onto the door frame. We filmed it, photographed it and transcribed the text:

Ali [...] Needs me [...] he doesn't know it  
I need her too but he needs me

Lucy is a lagoon  
Lucy is lurvely  
violence  
MyckMy, Let me suck it! Please!

Chiz is cheesy  
Chiz's colour is  
Julian is Joy [...]  
Julian's Joke

[...] hole it hurts and much curry

Cube Please don't go  
The Cube (like a dice, only more so) Graz.00  
Tonight was v. good

Let's take this board

[...] is hilarious  
Kari is kinky  
Kari is [...]

Murty

Miss Laura Leigh heats it up!

$\sqrt{34.4}$   $14.2 \div 10$  + Log.225

Spell Reftniereey

is Debbie Definite, Debbie is defined, Debbie is dirty, Debbie is bear  
Adam doesn't understand that

Belief cannot be de-bunked  
Nor can my briefs

Bruce is benevolent  
Hogge is a tomato  
Julian is a [...]

Chiz is a badass  
Jack is a peach  
Ben is a man that goes  
Laura is a woman  
Debbie is an avalanche  
Cathey is a nectarine  
Lucy is a blackberry

Level of my belly button  
Kari is a clementine  
Heath is a kiwi  
Marianne is a grapefruit  
Jean is grapes with slime  
Rod is a pea  
Bruce is a plum  
Graham is a black grape

Tom Cusak

A drunken I love you  
Was a shock in itself  
Like a shove in the heart  
A knock on the block  
I had a sneaking suspicion  
You wouldn't speaking  
Those words in the  
Queue for the loo  
Had you not been drinking  
Which set me to thinking  
Am I falling in love with you

Mark is Burt Lancaster  
Chiz is Charles Bronson  
Hogge is Steve McQueen  
Julian is Oliver Reed  
Ben is Woody Allen  
Debbie is Vanessa Redgrave  
Kari is Ingrid Bergman Julie Andrews  
Jean is Jean-Paul Belmondo  
Bruce is Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Nicky is Alison Steadman

Tim is Ian McKellan  
Rod is Mel Gibson  
Laura is Diana Dors  
Heath is [...]  
Marianne is Mia  
Lucy is Juliet Lewis  
Cathey is Emily Watson  
Graham is Terence Stamp

The insistent '[name] is' marks an archival present on this 'back office' working space of the Cube. The doorway is a pinch point on busy evenings as volunteers slide past one another to move from Front of House to bar to fridge through to the kitchen and office area to wash glasses and grab packets of crisps. It is also a social space for volunteers at the end of an event evening. The names listed alongside volunteers are familiar from film history but are rendered ridiculous when juxtaposed with the fruit comparisons and the knowing sexual innuendo.

### *Findings and Analysis*

At the end of Day 2, we gathered to share our recordings and our attempts to produce an initial media archaeology of the Cube.

Dani and Esther had spent the day working on an archaeology of a drum that they found backstage. They began by looking at various bodes at the Cube done with different kinds of tape. They were interested in what they could find out about what people did from the objects in the spaces. While looking at the different kinds of tape, they were soon distracted by a note taped to the bottom of a drum. The note was a set list from Mike Heron and the Trembling Bells from December 2014, with the writing facing up so that the drummer could read through the transparent drum surface to see the list of song titles as they played. Dani and Esther were struck by the dents on the striking surface of the drum as indexical marks of the songs played. They took photographs of the tape on the drum and made a book, which takes the reader on a journey from macro to micro scale of the various practices at the Cube. The Cube is unusual in that the people who do things there sometimes do not physically meet. Or, rather, the only ways in which people and things encounter each other is through the collisions and encounters with and across things.

Zuleika and Jim talked about their attempts to create a chronology from the outside in. They looked for little spaces that would tell stories of change. They looked at the auditorium walls where the plaster had been removed. As a buildings archaeologist, Jim thought they were mid-19th century. They also looked at the modern Princess Row wall of the fly tower, made from reclaimed brick. Jim said that it was 'the cheapest sort of wall you could build with any kind of stability'. For them the story of the 1916 Deaf Institute build was the archaeology that was disappearing as it was very difficult to see its material traces. They then went looking for the future, for accidents waiting to happen.

David produced a Tape Recorder, which is now in the Archaeo-Cube Archive. He went on a search for tape around the Cube. Tape is on a range of surfaces, from equipment to walls. He removed the tape, stuck it in the Tape Recorder and made notes about where it was found and any stories associated with it. This remains as an open-ended archive and all Cube volunteers are invited to record tape in the

Tape Recorder, providing they carefully note date, exact location and any narrative and/or material associations.

(Insert Figure 7 here. Tape Recorder. Photograph: Piccini)

Jamie recorded 19 separate dust zones and collected dust into little bags, which are now archived. He thinks there might be an interesting project in chemically analyzing the dust and turning it into different paints for the renovated Cube. The dust find locations were noted on sticky labels that were stuck on the bags but there was no attempt to be systematic in this practice. The aim was to take archaeology's clichéd forensic obsession and transform it into something playful where the aim was not to find an accurate past but to produce options for the future.

Monica and Laura took rubbings of non-slip surfaces and explored patterns and tiles in the lounge area of the Cube. They produced rubbings of the areas where different materials and patterns cross over in order to focus on spaces of work and emotion. Laura filmed outside of the projection room and experimented with connecting up different spaces, which eventually resulted in her HyperCube tour.<sup>4</sup> Alison and Jo attempted to produce rubbings of the micro marks on the tiles in the toilets, but found that this was not possible with the materials that they had to hand. Instead, Alison worked with the constraints of the paper, charcoal and colours to explore how best to respond to the patina of place, informed by Jo's consideration of textures, assemblages and markings. All four recombined the spaces to create idealised maps of the Cube.

Finally, Kate Maxwell took 35mm film photographs. She intended to work with older celluloid technologies to respond to the building. She wrote 2 poems: to the projection room and to the auditorium and made archaeological drawings of different spaces. Her main focus, however, came about through these practices of attention. It was only through engaging with the finer grain of The Cube through writing and imaging that she was able to 'see' aspects of the space that seemed to confound rational operation. For example, her archaeological practice prompted her to ask why we would need both a bell and a horn in the main bar area. Rather than use photography to record the building's features or extant artefacts, she used the photographs as an active form of essaying space.

## **Conclusion**

Following the June 2015 workshop, we gathered again in September to pursue our developing practices and interests in order to produce a more data-rich contribution to the archive. Then, in October 2015, we presented our activities and findings at the Rebox event where, together with the architects and designers, we shared with the audience our thinking about the future of this space. This was in advance of being informed that our Arts Council England funding application had not been successful. However, rather than this being paralyzing news, the lack of public funding has freed up the possibilities for the Cube. Over Spring and Summer 2016, we have been renovating many of the spaces and electrical and digital infrastructures. Lack of external funding has resulted in a greater sense of communal responsibility for the space and its transformations.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1eYMaLoyu0>

It appears clear to us that any archaeology of the Cube Microplex needs to be multi-scalar and demands an assemblage- rather than artefact-level approach to working through the human and non-human entanglements of technology, body, site and archive that constitute this art cinema. A site such as the Cube offers the potential to explore the interpolations of Vismann's files (2008) and Ernst's zombie media (2013). A deep awareness also on the part of the Cube volunteers of proprietary media control leads to our network infrastructure being a Linux-based, build-it-yourself server. We are highly aware of the entanglement of our media practices and those of the development, production, post-production and screening of the films that we show with wider global forces and their deleterious environmental impacts. A site-based archaeology *as such* enables the presencing and mobilization of the multiple, diverse agencies of media. Practising archaeology invites us to attend to space, space and material culture in unusual and productive ways.

Archaeo-Cube is an ongoing collaborative project that will shift over time in response to funding applications and the amount of unscheduled time that participants can devote to it. The space is continually in flux and the photographs we produced in Summer of 2015 are, on the one hand, simple snapshots of objects that flow in and out of the spaces in unpredictable ways. Yet, both disciplinary archaeological recording practices and the practices of media archaeology engage with synchronic and diachronic approaches to material. Our attempts to conduct a complex, site-based archaeology of the Cube were not intended to produce a genealogy of the technologies at site, although that kind of granular level analysis is the next step for this project. Instead, the impact of undertaking this form of multi-scalar, assemblage-focused archaeology has been to transform the ways in which we, as Cube volunteers, have understood the working environment. The agencies of architecture, of surface, of depth, of assemblage and of technological infrastructure have been manifested through the three events held so far. The Cube gathers multiple cultural techniques (Siegert, 2013; Winthrop-Young, 2014) and is, as a volunteer-run art and cinema space, its own form of cultural technique.

Undertaking a contemporary archaeology of the Cube, using the full range of promiscuous methods developed and practised by both academic and developer-funded archaeologists, manifests the ways in which a range of these techniques intersect. Where Fickers and van den Oever (2013) adopt re-enactment-based experimental archaeology as a method of conducting media archaeology, in our project we pursued multi-modal, landscape-based site survey in order to expand media archaeology methods to include those approaches that attend to the 'networkyness' of technological assemblages. The outcomes of our contemporary media archaeology are geared towards creating a polyphonic archaeology that addresses the otherwiseness of place and technology, that generates source materials from which further media work may emerge and that throws a new light on the ways in which the techno-media assemblage of the art-and-cinema space produces new ways of worlding the world. Contemporary archaeological methods open out multiple understandings of media as material culture and landscape while situating the study of media as 'properly' archaeological.

The Cube community wishes to continue this work and there is potential for designing a longer-term project that develops the nascent findings of the first

workshops. Combining synchronic and diachronic approaches to the Cube as site, as landscape, as assemblage will inform a greater understanding of the performative role of media in the production of sociabilities and modes of making at the Cube. The Cube's material-discursive practices world the world in specific ways that only contemporary archaeological methods begin to frame. Mixed archaeological methods add empirical ground and complexity to media archaeology and we anticipate continuing to contribute to this expanded field.

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